

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

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FM USINT CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5154

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 0449

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: BEXP EG US

SUBJECT: MINE CLEARANCE IN SUEZ CANAL

REF: CAIRO 443

1. UK AMBASSADOR ADAMS TELLS ME HE MADE RECOMMENDATION TO LONDON SHORT TIME AGO, IN RESPONSE EGYPTIAN FEELERS, TO AGREE TO HAVE THE ROYAL NAVY DO THE SUEZ MINE CLEARANCE OPERATION. AS YET, HE HAS HAD NO RESPONSE, BUT UNDERSTANDS UK EMBASSY WASHINGTON WAS INSTRUCTED DISCUSS SUBJECT WITH DEPARTMENT.

2. ACCORDING ADAMS, BRITISH NAVAL ATTACHE BELIEVES JOB IS TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR ANY PRIVATE FIRM. MOREOVER, GIVEN SHORTAGE OF EGYPTIAN MINE SWEEPING VESSELS, HE BELIEVES ROYAL NAVY SHOULD DO THE ENTIRE JOB. HE ESTIMATES THAT TWO TEAMS OF THREE MINE HUNTERS EACH WOULD BE NEEDED FOR THE OPERATION: ONE FROM PORT SAID, THE OTHER FROM SUEZ. EACH TEAM WOULD HAVE TO CLEAR APPROACHES BEFORE ENTERING THE CANAL. ALTHOUGH BRITS HAVE NO IDEA HOW MANY MINES THERE MAY BE, AND CAN THEREFORE GIVE NO TIME FRAME, THEY CONSIDER SALVAGE OPERATIONS COULD TAKE PLACE
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IMMEDIATELY AFTER A SECTION WAS CLEARED OF EXPLOSIVES.

3. BRIT ESTIMATE IS THAT THE NORTHERN SEGMENT FROM THE GREAT BITTER LAKE TO PORT SAID SHOULD BE EASY AS THE BOTTOM IS SANDY. IN CONTRAST, FROM GREAT BITTER LAKE SOUTH MAY BE MORE DIFFICULT AS BOTTOM IS SILT AND ROCKS, MAKING MINE LOCATION MORE DIFFICULT. ADAMS SAYS HE IS STILL AWAITING WORD FROM LONDON, BUT SUBJECT IS TO BE DIS*USSED IN GREATER DETAIL SOME TIME LATER THIS WEEK IN LONDON BETWEEN BRITISH MINISTRY OF DEFENSE OFFICIALS AND DEPUTY HEAD OF SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY.

4. COMMENT: I WOULD HOPE BRITS SEE THEIR WAY CLEAR TO DOING THIS JOB. IT IS LIKELY TO TAKE NAVAL EXPERTS IF IT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED EFFECTIVELY AND EXPEDITIOUSLY. IF US NAVY BECAME INVOLVED, SOVIETS WOULD DOUBTLESS PUT PRESSURE ON EGYPTIANS TO ALSO ENGAGE SOVIET NAVY FOR PART OF THE JOB. IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE IF NEITHER WE NOR SOVIETS WERE INVOLVED AND ROYAL NAVY IS PRESUMABLY FULLY CAPABLE PERFORMING THIS OPERATION.

5. PLEASE ADVISE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS.
EILTS

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